



When Your Walk Doesn't Match Your Talk

(a spotlight on company culture)



We thought it would be a fun exercise to analyze a few different companies and see what we could glean about their culture based on nothing more than what we could find online.

Company reviews on job boards, customer reviews, and company Facebook pages can tell us a lot about customer and employee perception, which can have an enormous impact on your brand.

This exercise does not include content from individual social accounts or private groups, only publicly available review sites such as Glassdoor and Yelp as well as the company website and their Facebook page(s).



per|cul|cha

performance
culture
change



Who:

A global tech company

Years in business:

25+

Size:

3,000+ employees

Structure

US Headquarters with multiple
offsite business units in US
and worldwide

Their Talk - How They Describe Themselves

- Fast-paced, dynamic, high energy work.
- Multi-disciplinary and international collaboration leading to teaming between cultures and functions.
- Employee empowerment, culture of care, work/life balance.

Sounds like they might be a good company. Let's take a look to see what current and former employees have to say about what it's really like to work there.

Their Walk - How Others Describe Them

First, the good stuff.

Pros:

"Work-life balance, benefits, atmosphere, energy, long-term business prospect."

"Great people, good environment, good opportunities."

"Good Benefits Salary, Daily perks (Fruits, Tea, coffee, pizza)."

"...a great work environment and great products."

"Good people, benefits, solid legacy offerings, great hardware business."

Based on the Pros, it sounds like this company might have an aligned culture and are walking their talk. Let's dig a little deeper and see what else current and former employees have to say.

Cons:

“Upper Management does not hold appropriate parties accountable.”

“Senior management is compensated based on MBO's and these become business priorities for selfish reasons.”

“High competition for quality workers has hurt in all areas.”

“Upper management is only concerned with covering their backsides with regard to the parent company...”

“I've seen several people let go that were huge assets.”

A Gallop study found that:

75% of the reason people leave their jobs is because of their managers.

Looking even deeper into specific reviews left on various job boards about this company, some patterns start to emerge.

“Heavily siloed, departments don't communicate and product lines are virtually treated as separate companies.”

“There is a seriously toxic culture.”

“...these are people who seem firmly to believe that, since they are managers, they are absolved from being reasonable or polite.”

“This is not working on a team with leaders, it is working with a group of trauma victims led by schoolyard bullies.”

“Sure, the science is definitely interesting and that's certainly exciting, but will you be on edge because of that excitement or will it be because you are in a constant state of Fight-or-Flight because you must constantly fend off narcissistic attacks from the substantially unhinged people you work with?”

“The opportunity to work with really interesting science and several good people (who are likely not on your team). You will learn every single bad management tactic known to mankind, so that you might avoid them in your future endeavors.”

“Learning about how not to behave in public, with almost daily demonstrations by management.”

“Politics, siloed, very incompetent management at BU level.”

“Expect lots of negative reinforcement, thinly-veiled public censure, and blind authoritarianism from your supervisor. HR is complicit in this, so don't expect any help there.”

“Abusive, insecure middle-management, with over inflated titles and the egos to match. “Old Boy's Club” attitudes everywhere, especially from management.”

Our Takeaway

Having conducted a simple search for company reviews, it's clear to us that for the work and benefits offered, this company is potentially a great place to be. Unfortunately, these predominantly negative insider reviews, which were consistent across multiple locations, obscure the benefits and point directly to the company culture.

This company may have interesting work with good pay and benefits, which could be attractive to a potential job candidate. But those things alone are not enough if the culture is one mired in dysfunction, where employees feel hindered from doing their best work.

For the company in this spotlight, it is difficult to discern whether culture is a concern for the CEO, but based on what appeared on its website - which focuses primarily on the work the company does with very little mentioned about the people - it is clear that culture is not a priority. Instead, what appears to be most important to this company are the products, potentially at the expense of their people.

Management is the primary Con identified and was especially emphasized as an issue by employees at one satellite location; however, the same sentiments also popped up in other locations including the Headquarters. Signs of misalignment might at first show up as isolated incidents, but over time, those patterns will begin to replicate more frequently across the company.

Aligned cultures will demonstrate consistency within and between Business Units in those matters deemed important by the CEO, just as misalignments point to the values present in the norms and gaps between stated and actual behaviors. If the CEO is unaware of these issues, that reflects upon the culture just as it does if he or she is intentionally creating them.

Not Just An Employee Issue

It takes effort and courage to sit down and write a review on your company and most people won't put the time in to do it. Instead they'll just move on. It could be said that such reviews are really a gift of awareness. They demonstrate true sentiment and highlight areas where improvement and alignment can be made. Given the number and consistency of the reviews, it's a fair bet to say that they likely represent a larger population of current and former employees.

Because of these reviews, the brand is at a disadvantage. Anyone interested in working at this company who researches it will find not just a few, but many negative reviews that could turn them off from applying. In a tight labor market like we have today, this can create tangible, expensive issues for the company.

But it's not just a big negative for hiring. These public insider perspectives are also visible to prospective customers doing basic product/service research - and what we found could bring up doubt that this would be a desirable company to engage with.

It takes roughly 40 positive customer experiences to undo the damage of a single negative review*. And employee experience is just as, if not more, important than customer experience, since employees are the ones who represent the company brand and can directly, as well as indirectly, affect customer experience.

"The management is full of "pigeon managers", the kind who show up every once in a while to remind you that you are doing a terrible job and you have to do everything differently. Also, your coworkers will snipe you at every opportunity, as will the managers. Don't work here unless you are seriously desperate."

So when negative employee reviews begin showing up, it may be easy to write them off as just a few disgruntled ex-employees blowing off steam, but prospective employees and potential customers may see something very different.

In nearly every review, employees were overwhelmingly positive about the type of work and the benefits. That's a great start! But without an aligned culture to go with them, the investment in creating an attractive benefits package will likely be lost to the cost of losing and replacing unhappy employees.

Regardless of company size, creating an aligned culture requires true commitment by the CEO, and buy-in from other leaders in terms of time, energy and desire. While much easier for smaller companies to achieve, where shifting the culture can be accomplished faster and less expensively than it would in large organizations, it doesn't prevent larger companies from aligning their culture in measured and incremental ways by starting with a business unit or department.

As you'll see from our other '*Spotlights on Company Culture*', workplace culture has a direct impact on your staff turnover, ability to attract new candidates and the internal/external perception of your brand. In the short-term it can make or break a sale. But it doesn't stop there. Customers who have had great experiences can be silent ambassadors for the brand — quietly recommending you, your product or service to their friends and colleagues. With a poor experience, it's safe to say they are more likely to recommend their friends and colleagues avoid you at all costs. And they'll gladly say why.

In a world where customer experience is everything, it's time to make your culture your leading brand asset.

Based on a study of over 25,000 employees world-wide:

Culture has an even bigger impact on an employee's decision to stay or go than their benefits package.

*Go beyond HR and find out what it takes to create the culture you want. To learn more send us an **email** or give us a call at **952 496 1444** — we'd love to chat!*



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